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Prussian courses of study, is the new relation to the classical models. There is no apparent desire to minimize the attention paid to good books, to lessen the pupil's amount of reading, but his essays are not to be mere copies of what he reads. As the author phrases it: "The work does not start from the classical form and arrangement, but is an attempt to lead up to it."

We are assured in this book that the German children do not write as well as they did a hundred years ago, when they were not tormented with a "method" at all. We are also informed that the writers themselves have suffered in style from their years of "discipline" as public-school pupils, and our sympathy with their effort is increased by the information that the Prussian schools are to blame that we have found their book so hard to read. But its faults are faults of style and arrangement: the fundamental idea is a sound one. Even German children must grow from within; and American teachers of English who imagine that American children can develop an English style by slavish imitation of a model, which can no more be incorporated into their being than your rainbow can be mine, are woefully mistaken.

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DEBATING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

In his discussion of my article, "Debating in the High School," published in the October *School Review*, Mr. E. C. Hartwell seems to have misunderstood altogether the purpose of the writer. Mr. Hartwell concludes his discussion by saying: "The defects inevitable to any school activity should not blind one to its undeniable merits." The article was written with full appreciation of the "undeniable merits" of high-school debating and with the desire that they might prevail. It proceeds, however, upon the assumption that the defects are not inevitable and suggests certain lines of reform. Similar criticisms by writers from different parts of the country justify the belief that, in certain important respects, there is a widespread need of reform in interscholastic debating.

For instance, in the same issue of the *School Review* containing the article under discussion, Mr. A. Monroe Stowe, of the Kansas State Normal College, makes exactly similar charges against school debates and offers similar suggestions for their improvement. To quote the opening of his article:

While debating is not one of the subjects of the curriculum of many of our secondary schools, few of these schools are without one or more debating societies. Those who have come in contact with this phase of secondary-school work appreciate the value of the training gained through debate, but they also recognize some of the harmful tendencies in our present-day practice. It is the purpose of this paper to indicate a few of these evils and to suggest some changes in our procedure which will counteract these harmful tendencies.

The tendencies just suggested may be traced to a mistaken idea of the function or aim of debate. In life the aim of debate is to lead others to act or think as we feel they

ought to act or think. In our school debates the aim most frequently is to gain the decision of the judges. In life we have little respect for the person who is not sincere in his effort to convince us, who really does not believe in the course of action he would have us take. In our school debates it is not uncommon for debaters to argue against their convictions. In life, logic, voice, gesture, and personality are important means which we use in our endeavors to accomplish the aim of debate. In our school debates these means become ends in themselves, points to be noted and scored by judges to be used in determining their artificial decision. In life we may see the light during debate and capitulate. In school debating the student who becomes convinced that he does not believe in his side is urged to continue in his preparation for what may justly be called an intellectual prize-fight.

In his outline of the reform of debating in the Kansas State Normal College, Mr. Stowe shows that the chief aims are to have the debaters argue on questions of personal interest, the club even going so far as to amend its constitution, so that "only questions of vital interest to Kansas and to Kansans could be investigated, discussed, and debated"; to have debaters argue only in accordance with their personal convictions after due investigation; and to have judgment rendered, not by three "honorable judges," but by a two-thirds vote of the club itself.

In a letter to the *Nation*, May 7, 1908, Mr. William T. Foster sets forth similar charges against interscholastic debating, as follows:

In view of the opposition to intercollegiate athletics, on the ground that they seriously conflict with the primary purposes of higher education, it might be supposed that college authorities would welcome debating without question as the one form of intercollegiate rivalry contributing directly and highly to the intellectual interests of the college. On the contrary, it is said that debates, as they are now conducted, "impress the hearer with a waning sense of reality," because they are too formal, too rigid in their rules, artificial in their aims, in short, quite unlike the kind of contests in which students will find themselves engaged in the life beyond commencement. One result of this formalism is said to be a noticeable lack of sincerity and earnestness on the part of the speakers. Then again the question for debate is often so cleverly phrased, so vague and so complicated, that the time which should be spent on vital issues is wasted on quibbling over the meaning of terms. The petty and academic discussion which results seems more like a controversy of the Middle Ages than an attempt to get at the truth of a contemporary practical problem. Still further to preclude the possibility of real debating are the memorized speeches which render impossible that effective adaptation to opposing speakers, that running rebuttal, that one feature which distinguishes the real debater from the elocutionist. And when after an hour or two of such lifeless discussion, a team of undergraduates arrives with remarkable ease at sweeping conclusions, and proves "beyond the shadow of a doubt" a proposition which is still puzzling statesmen, the whole affair seems to some people little short of ridiculous.

In this same letter Mr. Foster dwells at length upon the evils of the practice by which some debaters are forced to speak against their convictions, and concludes his letter thus:

Anyone who cares more for the real good of the work than for the formalism and the verdicts of judges will not find it necessary to encourage young men, in an institution which stands above all for the pursuit of truth, to speak against their convictions. Institutions which have honest and intelligent regard for the essentials of debating, and are unhampered by the notion that the non-essentials must forever conform to tradition, will make all their studies aid in the development of able debaters, will have no special interest in the preparation for a particular contest, and no concern with the charges against "unreal" debating.

It is true that Mr. Foster is speaking of college students; but, if these faults are condemned in students of mature years, should they not all the more be checked in the case of high-school pupils?

Mr. Foster includes also among the defects of interscholastic debating the use of the purposely vague question. To do away with this evil he recommends the triangular system of debates now generally adopted by the larger colleges, and even goes so far as to urge an exchange of briefs between opposing teams. Now had Mr. Hartwell applied to this point concerning vague questions, made in the article he criticizes, that strict interpretation of language he so highly recommends for young debaters, he would not have fallen under such misapprehension as he seems to have done. For it is strict interpretation for which the writer asks, interpretation so strict as to shut out any possibility of quibbling, definition so accurate as to make certain that both sides have the same understanding of the question for debate. Again Mr. Hartwell labors under misapprehension when he represents the writer as objecting to the discussion of public questions. The objection was to deep and complicated questions, not clearly related to the life of the pupils. A public question may be simple enough, a local question too complicated, to be handled by high-school pupils. Nor does Mr. Hartwell put the case quite fairly when he says that such academic questions as "Could Brutus have saved the republic?" "Was the execution of Charles I justifiable?" were offered as substitutes for formal debates. The article expressly cites these as types of questions arising in the course of regular class work and promoting off-hand, spontaneous debate, while an entirely different list of questions is suggested as of vital interest in more formal debates. As for Mr. Hartwell's fear that the supply of local questions may give out, it is difficult to perceive why it should be exhausted any more than the supply of public questions, unless, perchance, a certain locality should stand still, while the remainder of the world moves.

Upon another point, too, Mr. Hartwell fails to place upon the language of the article the strict construction which he extols as training for his young debaters, when he contends that his debaters have not had their morals undermined by the practices of debating. The article speaks of the formation of habits of insincere speech as an immoral tendency to be resisted. But surely to speak of a practice as having an immoral tendency is a very different thing from saying that such a practice "has sapped the moral fiber of our pupils." Moreover, it is Mr. Hartwell, not the writer of the article, who speaks of

debating as a "pernicious influence." And when it is said that debating contests are liable to abuse, is that equivalent to saying that interscholastic debating is "literally cankered with corrupt and corroding influences"?

Finally, had Mr. Hartwell interpreted accurately the criticism made in the article of the coach's part in high-school debating, he would have found that objection was made, not necessarily to coaching itself, but to coaching as it is too frequently abused in high-school debates. Mr. Hartwell asks the question whether "any further criticism has been passed than with equal truth must be given to the teacher and the text who first guide the boy's unwilling feet into the labyrinth of literature." The answer is an emphatic affirmative. For the article recommends such supervision and guidance by the debating coach as a teacher gives his class. But objection is made to coaching which would be equivalent to the writing of a pupil's compositions by his English teacher, or the working out step by step of a pupil's "original" in geometry by his mathematics teacher, followed by presentation of these results as the bona-fide work of the pupils.

That the overstepping of legitimate bounds in the coaching of debates is no infrequent evil is indicated by the following extracts from articles or speeches recently published. In the *Century* for October, 1911, Mr. Rollo L. Lyman, associate professor of rhetoric and oratory in the University of Wisconsin, has this to say about coaches:

A third form of dishonesty sometimes arises. Coaches too frequently are far more responsible for the argument presented than are the debaters themselves. One debating coach had made a special study of "trades-unions" for ten years. He began in his high-school debates, followed it out in his college contests, and finally, taking charge of a college team, gave them three carefully prepared speeches to memorize. Thus his students received none of the value which comes of working up a case. They were parrots, nothing more. For this evil there are two possible remedies. Many colleges, among them Stanford, the University of California, and Swarthmore, rightly throw the burden of preparation entirely upon their debaters, doing away with all coaching, and trusting to the honor of their opponents to do likewise. Still better is reducing the time of preparation from three months to six weeks. Stanford and California pursue this method in their annual "Carnot" debates, which are models of the best debating in the country. The actual debating deteriorates under shorter preparation, but the exercise becomes far less academic, and more nearly like the occasions of everyday life. The debates under this system are contests not of voluminous research, but of individual constructive thinking. Above all, this plan places the men upon their own responsibility, and as far as possible eliminates opportunities for dishonesty.

Similarly, in the *Educational Review* for December, 1911, Mr. Charles Sears Baldwin, after much praise of debating, observes:

But there is a real danger—the coach. The very keenness of competition which has raised debating has in some cases threatened to wreck it. Very generally college debating committees employ an expert, whether from the faculty or from outside, to train their intercollegiate teams. In itself this brings no danger. The danger arises when the coach goes beyond criticism into making the case himself; it grows as he

consciously or unconsciously tries to make the debaters his spokesmen; it is at its worst when he is permitted to choose men to act his play. Then instead of a battle of students we may have a battle of coaches. That this insidious sort of professionalism not only degrades debating but clogs it ought to be evident now to East and West alike. Speakers who in contests within the college had shown themselves strong and ready enough to win the coveted places have on the intercollegiate platform been neither strong nor ready; have been, on the contrary, laborious and slow like David in the armor of Saul. The coach's case is of course better than anything they could devise—for him, but not for them. Not only can no man debate another man's case well, but, if he could, he should not. Else college debating will soon be paralyzed. Its main reason for being, its fundamental value in college life, is that it trains men to gain their own insight and impress their own grasp.

Although these cases are drawn from college life, the reasoning holds good for high-school pupils as well. Evidence is not lacking, however, as to similar abuses in coaching for high-school debates. A Sioux City, Iowa, newspaper gives the following report of a speech recently made before an Iowa teachers' convention:

"Interscholastic debates stir up enthusiasm, but they are absolute farces." W. H. Reno, of the high school at Elkader, and coach of his debating team, thus classified all public debates in a talk before the Iowa Teachers' Association:

"The trouble is that we do not debate vital subjects," said Mr. Reno. "When the pupils get upon a platform to debate a subject which their minds cannot grasp and on which their arguments are arranged in conclusive order, they are false to themselves and false to the public. If anybody had sense or half sense they would know that the pupils did not arrange their arguments, but that it was the work of the coach."

In connection with this, it is interesting to note that the debaters whom Mr. Hartwell especially commends for their originality of thought belong to Iowa high schools.

Now when in Maine and in Kansas, in New York and in Iowa and in Wisconsin, we find such perfect concurrence of opinion as to the existing evils of interscholastic debating and the remedies therefor, is it not time, despite the happy experience of Mr. Hartwell, with his two score or more of debates, that some general reform of interscholastic debating be undertaken? Certainly the undeniable merits of high-school debating should neither blind us to its manifest dangers, nor arrest attempts to remedy its defects.

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A CORRECTION

Superintendent Stacey, of Abilene, Kansas, informs me that the control of the schools in the second-class cities of Kansas which are under the commission form of government has not been placed in the hands of one of the commissioners, as was stated in my note in the December *School Review*. The plan was proposed, but was not adopted.

FRANK A. MANNY

THE BALTIMORE TEACHERS' TRAINING SCHOOL